

A PERSUASIVE TO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

THE
CIRCULAR LETTER,
FROM THE
MINISTERS and MESSENGERS
OF THE SEVERAL

Baptist Churches held with peace.

OF THE
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ASSOCIATION,

Assembled at OAKHAM, June 2, 3, 4, 1801.

Maintaining the important doctrines of three equal persons in the Godhead; eternal and personal election; original sin; particular redemption; free justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ; efficacious grace in regeneration; the final perseverance of real believers; the resurrection of the dead; the future judgment; the eternal happiness of the righteous; and everlasting misery of such as die impenitent; with the congregational order of the churches, inviolably;

To the several Churches they represent, or from which they have received Letters:

Meeting at Loxcos, Derbyshire; Sutton-Ashfield, and Nottingham, Nottinghamshire; Sheepstead, Leicester, Sutton-in-the-Elms, Arnsby, and Foxton, Leicestershire; Oakham, Rutland; Spalding, Lincolnshire; Gretton, Clipstone, Gillsborough, Braunston, Walgrave, Kettering, Moulton, Northampton, and Road, Northamptonshire; Olney, Buckinghamshire; Thorne, Bedfordshire; and St. Albans, Hertfordshire.

Grace be to you, and Peace from God our Father, and from
Jesus Christ our Lord.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

OUR annual interview was pleasant, and we hope profitable. The accounts from the churches were many of them encouraging. The affliction of several of our brethren in the ministry, however, diminished our enjoyments: some of them were not able to attend with us; and others who were present appeared to be much indisposed. Help us, brethren, by your prayers, that useful lives may be preserved, and long continued as blessings to the churches.

In our Letters for the two preceding years we addressed you on the Discipline of the Primitive Churches, and the Qualifications for Church Fellowship. Desirous of promoting not only your edification more immediately, but also the spiritual improvement of those who form a part of your public assemblies, we this year present you with a few considerations intended as A PERSUASIVE TO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

Clipstone: Printed by J. W. Morris.

There are in all our congregations a number of individuals who appear, in a judgment of charity, to have received the truth in love, and whose conduct in other respects is such as becomes the gospel, but who live in the habitual neglect of its positive institutions. For real or avowed unbelievers to do this, would occasion no surprise; but that those who profess to love our Lord Jesus Christ, and who cherish the hope of eternal life through him, should thus seem to disregard his authority, is not a little surprising, and may well be considered as one of the peculiarities of the present state of religion amongst us. Nothing of this sort appeared in the times of the apostles. Converts to christianity were recognized by an open profession of the name of Christ, and admission to the fellowship of the church. The zeal and ardor of primitive believers admitted of no hesitation or delay: they never stopped to enquire how little they might do for Christ, and yet go to heaven; nor thought of reckoning this or the other ordinance not essential to salvation: but burning with love to the Redeemer, and zeal for his righteous cause, *they made haste, and delayed not to keep his commandments.* No sooner was Saul converted, than he *essay'd to join himself to the disciples.* Anticipating the pleasure that would result from an obedience to the divine command, and desirous of being numbered amongst the followers of the Lamb, the Eunuch, on believing that Jesus was the Son of God, exclaimed, with an agreeable surprise, *See, water! what doth hinder me to be baptized?* The Philippian Jailor, *believing in God, with all his house, was baptized, he and all his straightway,* even the same hour of the night in which Paul had spoken to them the word of the Lord. When the Samaritans *believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.* In those times as many as *gladly received the word, were baptized; and continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*—But how different is all this from the reluctance and supineness of professors in later times, who seem glad of any plea that may exempt them from obligation, or extenuate their remissness in respect to an open profession of the name of Christ, and a practical submission to the institutions of his church! For a change so novel in the visible state of christianity, we are led to enquire the cause; and, as a mean of correcting so prevalent an evil, to point out the importance of gospel fellowship, as binding upon the followers of Christ.

First, Let us enquire THE REASONS WHY THOSE WHO PROFESS TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST FOR SALVATION, AP-

FEAR, NEVERTHELESS, TO LIVE IN THE NEGLECT OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

It will be readily apprehended, that, by Fellowship in the Gospel, something more is meant than a friendly intercourse with individual christians, or a stated attendance on the solemnities of the sabbath; that it relates to that state of union peculiar to a christian society which includes a public profession of the name of Christ, and a solemn engagement to walk together in all his commandments and ordinances blameless. It is of the neglect of these important duties that we complain, and would now attempt to suggest a few hints tending to remove the impediments which may lie in the way.

There may be some amongst us, who, while their general conduct is such as entitles them to some respect, are nevertheless conscious of *living in some known sin*, and who may therefore feel it necessary to decline any immediate connexion with the church of God.—Certainly, where this is the case, we do not solicit any society; but would rather exhort such persons to confess and forsake their sins, that they may find mercy. The fellowship of christians is of a holy nature: it is a *fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ*: they have intercourse with God as the moral governor of the world, through Jesus the mediator; their object is to carry on the cause of truth and righteousness, to promote the Redeemer's glory, and mutually to labour after a conformity to his will: but it will be impossible to enter into these designs, or contribute to their accomplishment, if sin have dominion over us. There may be much civility, and many expressions of friendship; but where purity of heart and nearness to God are not carefully maintained, there would be none of that christian tenderness, oneness of spirit, holy freedom, and brotherly affection, in which the communion of saints so much consists. *If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* Living in sin, therefore, or having sinned and not repented, not only disqualifies us for the fellowship of christians on earth, but also renders us unmeet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Some, though not living in any known or positive evil, may think, nevertheless, that *a relation to the church of God would lay them under greater obligations to a strict and holy life* than they wish to take upon them, and hence prefer a state of freedom from such restraints.—It is allowed that such a connexion does indeed imply the most sacred of all engagements: we covenant to be the Lord's; renouncing all other lords

who have had dominion over us, we make mention only of his name. Having named the name of Christ, we are required to depart from all iniquity. Having sworn, we are bound to perform it, that we will keep his righteous judgments.—And is it indeed an object of dread to be bound to Christ and his service, by a solemn surrender of ourselves to him? If there be any amongst us who are of this opinion, we do not immediately invite them to our fellowship; but would rather urge them to enquire whether their hearts be right in the sight of God? The obligation to universal holiness, though it is directly acknowledged, and in a sense confirmed by an open profession of the name of Christ, yet it does not depend upon any such engagement on our part. Christ's service is not a matter of discretion. Whatever we are, or whatever we profess to be, our obligation is radically the same.

It may be pleaded by others that *church-fellowship is not essential to salvation*, and that therefore we may go to heaven without it.—Positive institutions are not indeed so essential to salvation, as that it could not in any case be obtained without them; but it does not follow, that therefore they are in no case necessary to salvation. We are sure that living in known sin would exclude us from the kingdom of heaven, and, for aught we know, living in the neglect of known duty may do the same. And if it be true, that Christ *becomes the author of eternal salvation to all them who OBEY him*, a disobedience to his commands may exclude us from an interest in his salvation, as well as a rejection of his truth. But if it were otherwise, and supposing we might go to heaven without attending to church ordinances, yet what a principle of selfishness does it discover! What a disregard for the authority of Jesus, what a want of love to him and zeal for his glory, to live in the neglect of known duty on the presumption that our own salvation may not be endangered by it! Is it lovely, is it worthy of a child and servant of God thus to act? It might suit a professor whose religion is nothing but selfishness; but let such remember that they have not the love of God in them: for *this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments*.

It is to be feared that some are kept from a public profession of Christ by mere *worldly motives*.—They have some flattering prospects in life, and their temporal interest would suffer by it. They have relations and friends who feel averse to religion, and would be offended at their openly professing it. The fear of being disinherited, or sustaining loss in their worldly circumstances, induces some persons to conceal their principles, in hopes that some future opportunity may be more favourable to their avowal, without subjecting them to temporal incon-

venience. But this temporising with religion, and treating it as a subordinate concern, is of serious importance: it implies a practical denial of Christ before men, and will we fear expose the party, if he die without repentance for it, to a being denied by Christ before the Father another day. *Lord, said one, I will follow thee; but let me first go and bury my father—Let me first go and bid them farewell who are at home,* says another. *Jesus answered, let the dead bury their dead:—follow thou me—No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*

The dread of reproach is the occasion of preventing some from following the Lord more fully.—A general and loose profession of the christian name is common enough, and to take up with a worldly religion attaches no stigma to its professor; but to enter into the spirit of the gospel, to come out from amongst the common herd of nominal christians, to be separate, to follow the Lord *fully*, and to keep his ordinances *as they were delivered*, will subject us to the charge of singularity, and that not only from the grossly immoral, but also from the devout and honourable. But shall we therefore be ashamed of Christ before men, and withhold ourselves from the communion of such as are walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless? *If any man be ashamed of me and of my words, saith our Lord, of him will I be ashamed before my Father and the holy angels.* Rather let us go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach; and if this is to be vile, let us be still more vile. He who would please the world, and accommodate his religion to the prevailing taste, undertakes more than he can perform, if he would be the servant of Christ.

“ ————— Faithful found
Among the faithless, faithful only he:
Among innumerable false, unmov'd,
Unshaken, unseduc'd, untterrify'd,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal:
Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth.”

MILTON.

Others may be deferring an attendance on divine ordinances till they receive some *particular impressions* to convince them of their duty.—They think it right for those who love Christ to own and follow him, and are willing to be considered as his friends, only they are waiting at the pool for the moving of the waters, in hopes of receiving some kind of ex-

traordinary intimations of the divine will respecting their immediate duty. Many persons appear to be looking for something of this sort, and because they go without it from time to time, conclude it is the mind of God that they should not comply with his ordinances; at least that they should not comply with them at present.—It is allowed indeed that impressions are desirable, provided it be truth or duty that is impressed; otherwise they deserve no regard: but let these be as desirable as they may, the want of them can never justify our living in the neglect of known duty. Nor are they at all adapted to shew us what is duty, but merely to excite to the performance of what may be proved to be duty without them. If the want of such impressions, or of such a state of mind as we are wishing for in a state of inactivity, would excuse us in the neglect of Church fellowship, they would also excuse us in the neglect of other religious duties. But such pleas are highly delusive, and serve only to discover our want of love and zeal in the cause of Christ.

Natural timidity appears to beset some, and keeps them back from an open profession of the name of Christ. They feel it desirable to own Christ before men, and are convinced of their obligation to do so; but are deterred by the publicity of such an engagement, and imagine themselves unable to make a good confession before so many witnesses.—The natural diffidence of some persons may indeed render this very formidable; but it should be remembered that to gain some advantage, or avoid some inconvenience in worldly affairs, such objections are generally overcome: and why should they be deemed insuperable in a matter of far greater importance? Our strength is small indeed, if we faint here. What should we do in times of persecution, when called to confess Christ at the peril of our lives? Our blessed Lord openly avowed our cause in the face of danger: he neither failed, nor was discouraged; but endured the cross, despising the shame. Cold indeed must our hearts be towards him, if we can suffer a few imaginary difficulties to hinder us from owning his righteous cause!

Finally, Some are deterred from a compliance with this duty by a *fear lest they should not be proper subjects*.—It is not owing to any dislike to the ways of the Lord, nor indifference to the glory of Christ, that some amongst us are living in the omission of his ordinances: they regularly attend on all the other means of grace, manifest good will to the Redeemer's cause, join in social prayer for its prosperity, and are lovers of good men; but fear they are not qualified to fill up a place in the christian church. The doubts which they entertain of

their own personal religion, the supposition that some eminent endowments and a larger degree of christian experience are necessary to such a connexion, together with the fear of deceiving others and being themselves deceived, not only excuse them in their own account from a public profession, but appear to justify and commend them in such a line of conduct.—We do not wish to persuade any person to profess that of which he is not conscious. But if it be indeed a matter of doubt whether they be true christians, we may be allowed to express our surprise that they in general discover so little concern about that all-important question. To be *walking in such darkness as not to know whither we are going*, is far from being desirable; and, if we have any proper sense of things, it must be very painful. And is it really a matter of doubt whether you be a believer, or an unbeliever; a friend to Christ, or an enemy; whether from your heart you wish well or ill to his kingdom in the world; whether your soul unites with those who love him, or with those who love him not? Remember this, there is no neutrality in this case: *He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad*. We are either Christ's friends, or his enemies; believers, or unbelievers. We either embrace the gospel, or reject it; would choose Christ and heaven for our portion, if we might have our choice, or the present world; and we have only to decide which. In other cases we are not at a loss in judging who or what we love and habitually prefer, nor in determining whose side we are of, or to whose interest we feel attached. If our heart be not with Jesus, by no means let us give him our hand, nor betray him with a kiss: but if it be, even though we may not enjoy the comforts of religion in so great a degree as some other christians, it becomes us, nevertheless, to express it by an open profession of his name. *If with the heart we believe unto righteousness, let us make confession with the mouth unto salvation*.

Secondly, We proceed to point out THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, AS BINDING UPON THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST.

If there were no other considerations to induce us to give up ourselves to a christian church, the requirements of our Lord and Saviour ought to be deemed sufficient. Those who pay no practical regard to this duty, generally live in the neglect of the ordinance of Baptism, which Jesus declared was *becoming* him and his followers; and also of the Supper, which he enjoined upon us when taking his leave of the world. The tenderness of this his dying request ought to overwhelm all

hesitation, and confound the very idea of delay. That a sinner should ask to be remembered of the Saviour, is nothing surprising; for if he forget us, we are eternally undone: but that the Lord of glory should ask to be remembered, and remembered as dying for us, is kind and condescending beyond expression. He who can deny such a request must surely be at a loss to prove himself the friend of Christ: *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

The importance which attaches to individual christians in uniting with churches, must bear some proportion to the importance of the existence of those churches: for if it be a matter of small account for any one christian to unite in fellowship, it may be the same for another, and so for all; which is the same thing as supposing it to be a matter of little consequence whether there be any christian churches in the world. But christian society seems to be no less essential to the carrying on the interest of Christ, than human society is for promoting the interest of man, and even for preserving alive a posterity upon the earth. Where do we ordinarily see the work of conversion carried on, but where a christian church is established, or where the word and ordinances are administered? When Christ ascended up on high, *he gave gifts to men*; and wherefore? *That the Lord God might dwell among them.* It is under a social character that christians are denominated the *house* or *temple* of God, in which he deigns to dwell; where his beauty is beheld, and where we enquire after truth. It is the *body of Christ*, which being fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working of the measure of every part, maketh increase unto the edifying of itself in love—The *golden candle-sticks*, by which the light of truth and holiness is exhibited to the world, among which our great High Priest condescends to walk—and the *dwelling places*, and *assemblies of Mount Zion*, on which Jehovah, as over Israel in the wilderness, has created a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; covering their glory with his defence.* The natural inference from these representations is, That if we have any regard for the interest of Christ, or any desire for walking in fellowship with him, we should surrender ourselves up to him, and to the fellowship of saints, according to his will. If we would find the Shepherd, we must *go forth by the footsteps of the flock.*

From the first creation of man upon earth, it was judged by his benevolent Creator *not good that he should be alone*; and

* Psalm lxxviii. 18. Eph. iv. 16. Rev. i. 12—20. Isai. iv. 5.

as the state of society advanced, its advantages were felt and acknowledged. *Two, saith the wise man, are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. And if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken.* These, and many more such considerations, which recommend Society in general, apply with peculiar force to Religious society. It is this which sweetens duty, aids our recovery when fallen, excites warm and gracious affections, and strengthens our hands to repel the temptations of an evil world.

We doubt not but that there are godly individuals scattered up and down in the world, who have little or no opportunity of enjoying the fellowship of saints: but it is seldom known that such persons arrive to any considerable eminence in spirituality, or usefulness. The eye, or the hand, is singularly useful *in the body*: but if separated, it would be otherwise. The most honourable member cannot say to the least honourable, and still less to the body, *I have no need of thee.* And if those who are lawfully prevented, suffer for the want of christian fellowship, What may be expected of those who voluntarily neglect it? If the Lord in his providence call us to walk alone, we may hope that he will, at least in some measure, make up the loss of public means by a greater blessing on private ones: but if the former be slighted, he will assuredly withdraw his blessing from the latter.

The neglect of positive institutions under the Old Testament, was sometimes punished with temporal judgments. The Lord sought even to slay his servant Moses, for having omitted to circumcise his son in Midian. And probably it is in allusion to the infliction of calamities for such neglects, that it is said in prophecy, *Whoso will not come up to the feast of tabernacles, upon them shall be no rain.** Under the gospel dispensation, it is God's usual way to punish, not by temporal, but spiritual judgments; and whether the neglect of his ordinances be not generally accompanied with a suspension of spiritual blessings, let experience determine.

The principle from which christian fellowship arises is love; and this is of so much importance as to be made by the scriptures a test of personal religion. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not the brethren, abideth in death.* But if we love the

* Zach. xiv. 17.

brethren, we shall desire to be one with them in the tenderest ties; to join in ardent and honourable efforts, to pray and to praise with them, to sympathize in their sorrows, and rejoice in their joys; in short, to cast in our lot with them, that whatever good thing the Lord their God may bestow upon them, he may bestow upon us. This is the natural operation of love: and without such a tendency at least, it cannot be genuine. The renewed heart beats spontaneously after the closest possible union with God and his people. Its language is, *Treat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me!* David, even in praying for the salvation of his own soul, did not ask for a separate blessing, but for a share in the portion of the people of God. *Remember me, O Lord, with the favour which thou bearest to thy people: O visit me with thy salvation: that I may see the good of thy chosen; that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation; that I may glory with thine inheritance!*

The simplicity of gospel ordinances must render an inattention to them inexcusable. Under the former dispensation, the positive institutions of religion were numerous and complicated. The distance also which the Israelites, and especially the proselytes from among the Gentiles, had to journey at the times of their solemn assemblies, was very great when compared with ours. God required of them great labour and expense, yet the godly amongst them cheerfully complied. And now that he hath brought the bread of life home to us, raining manna as it were around our tents, shall we therefore make light of it? If the Lord had bid us do some great thing, should we not have done it? Then how much rather when he saith, Wash and be clean?

One of the most interesting ideas given us of the celestial world is that of a state of glorious society. Angels and saints innumerable, ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, each vie with the other in love and praise, while every creature in heaven and earth and under the earth, and in the sea, unite in ascribing blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. And how are we to be fitted for this blessed state, but by associating with the people of God on earth? It is thus that we are prepared for glory. Nay more: It is thus that we actually partake of it. By cordially uniting with the friends of Jesus in this world, we unite with

the whole family of heaven and earth, which is but one. Hence it is that believers in the present life are represented as already come unto Mount Sion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, to God the judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

If these sentiments be properly considered and felt, they will not only stimulate those to prompt obedience, who have hitherto neglected the institutions of Christ, but impress us all with a sense of our great advantages, and cause us to rejoice with trembling. We stand on high ground: we walk as upon the borders of heaven: let us watch and pray, lest we be found cleaving to the earth, notwithstanding these distinguished privileges. Nay, it is not impossible that from these heights some of us may fall, like the inhabitants of Capernaum, into perdition!

Finally, It may not be unprofitable for those of us who are ministers and members of churches to enquire whether the neglects of which we complain may not in part be owing to something in us? If a minister be uninterested, and consequently uninteresting, in his work; if there be but little favour in his spirit, or profit arising from his communications; if the people be haughty, covetous, self-willed, litigious, and conformed to this world; there will be but little encouragement for young christians to cast in their lot with them. Or, if none of these evils be remarkably apparent, yet if there be a want of holy affection and free conversation, it will not be much otherwise. It is by our having fellowship with God, that godly minds will be induced to have fellowship with us. *We will go with you, say they, for we have heard that God is with you!*

Beloved brethren, Farewell!

JOHN SUTCLIFF, Moderator.

BREVIATES.

TUESDAY Evening. VI. Met to hear the Letters from the Churches. Brother Read began in prayer; brother Sutcliff was chosen Moderator; and brother Nichols concluded.

WEDNESDAY Morning VI. Time was spent in prayer by the following brethren:—*Millar* of Partney, *Berridge* of Northampton, and *Barker* of Towcester. Read Letters from some of the Churches which were then received.

At Half-past Ten, Assembled for public worship. Brother Crapps prayed. Brother Evans preached from 1 Pet. i. 4, 5. *An inheritance—reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.* Brother Edmonds

prayed. Brother Fuller preached from Jude 3. *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints.* Brother Hopper concluded.

In the afternoon, the Ministers and Messengers heard the Circular Letter, which was approved, and ordered to be printed. The Letter for next year, On **THE PRACTICAL USES OF THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM**, to be written by brother Fuller.

At VI in the Evening, met for public worship. Brother Morris prayed; brother Keelly preached from Matt. xi. 5. *The poor have the gospel preached unto them:* and brother Mills concluded.

THURSDAY Morning VI. After prayer by brother Fletcher, the Ministers communicated the exercises of their minds during the past year. Sung a parting hymn: brother Burten prayed; dismissed the Congregation; settled the business of the Association Fund; and the Moderator concluded in prayer.

The next Association to be held at **NORTHAMPTON**, on the Tuesday and Wednesday after **WHITSUN-WEEK**. Brother Sutcliff and Hopper to preach.

††† Put up at the **SARACENS-HEAD**.

—O—O—
State of the Churches since the last Association.

Received	{	By Baptism - 101	Removed	{	By Death 33
		Restored - 2			Dismission 10
					Exclusion 21
		Added 103			Diminished 64
Clear Increase 39.					

ADVERTISEMENT.

As many enquires have been made for Complete Sets of the **ANNUAL LETTERS OF THIS ASSOCIATION**, it is proposed, if duly encouraged, to publish them by Subscription, for the benefit of the Association Fund, which is principally applied to the Assistance of Village Preaching. The work, on a large type and good paper, making about one thousand pages, will be comprised in 2 Vol. 8vo. Price 10s.

Subscriptions received by the Secretary, Mr. Morris; Mr. Button, Paternoster-Row, London; or by any of the Ministers of the Association.

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The Practical Uses of Christian Baptism.

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23

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OF THE
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Assembled at NORTHAMPTON, June 15, 16, 1802:

Maintaining the important doctrines of three equal persons in the Godhead; eternal and personal election; original sin; particular redemption; free justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ; efficacious grace in regeneration; the final perseverance of real believers; the resurrection of the dead; the future judgment; the eternal happiness of the righteous; and everlasting misery of such as die impenitent; with the congregational order of the churches, inviolably;

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Meeting at Lofcoe, Derbyshire; Sutton-Ashfield, and Nottingham, Nottinghamshire; Sheephead, Leicester, Sutton-in-the-Elms, Anstby, and Foxton, Leicestershire; Oakham, Rutland; Spalding, Lincolnshire; Gretton, Clipstone, Guilsborough, Braunston, Walgrave, Kettering, Moulton, Northampton, and Road, Northamptonshire; Olney, Buckinghamshire; Thorne, Bedfordshire; St. Albans, Hertfordshire; Sobam, Cambridgeshire; and Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire.

Grace be to you and Peace from God our Father, and from Jesus Christ our Lord!

BELOVED BRETHREN,

UNDER divine protection we held our annual meeting at the time and place appointed, and hope we enjoyed communion with God, and with his saints. From the contents of your Letters it appears that there has been no great encrease in the churches this year, in regard of numbers; but we are happy to find that in other respects there is cause for thankfulness. Excepting two or three of the churches, which are in a low afflicted state, the rest of them are dwelling in peace, and walking in the fear of the Lord; and one * of them, which had been dissolved, is now revived, and again admitted to fellowship with us.

In connexion with our last General Letter, and agreeably to the appointment made at the yearly meeting, we now ad-

* The church at Burton-upon-Trent.